

all the powers of wise judgment which have been acquired by education, and submit to the control of enthusiasm, passion, animal impulse, or brute appetite. A crowd always has a common stock of elementary faiths, prejudices, loves and hates, and pet notions. The common stock is acted on by the same stimuli, in all the persons, at the same time. The response, as an aggregate, is a great storm of feeling, and a great impulse to the will. Hence the great influence of omens and of all popular superstitions on a crowd. Omens are a case of "egoistic reference."¹

An army desists from a battle on account of an eclipse. A man starting out on the food quest returns home because a lizard crosses his path. In each case an incident in nature is interpreted as a warning or direction to the army or the man. Thus momentous results for men and nations may be produced without cause. The power of watchwords consists in the cluster of suggestions which has become fastened upon them. In the Middle Ages the word "heretic" won a frightful suggestion of base wickedness. In the seventeenth century the same suggestions were connected with the words "witch" and "traitor."

"Nature" acquired great suggestion of purity and correctness in the eighteenth century, which it has not yet lost, "Progress" now bears amongst us a very undue weight of suggestion. Suggestibility is the quality of liability to suggestive influence.²

"Suggestibility is the natural faculty of the brain to admit any ideas whatsoever, without motive, to assimilate them, and eventually to transform them rapidly into movements, sensations, and inhibitions."³ It differs greatly in degree, and is present in different grades in different crowds. Crowds of

different nationalities would differ both in degree of suggestibility and in the kinds of suggestive stimuli to which they would respond. Imitation is due to suggestibility. Even suicide is rendered epidemic by suggestion and imitation.⁴ In a crisis, like a shipwreck, when no one knows what to do, one, by acting, may lead them all

¹ Friedmann, *Wahnideen im Vblkerleben*, 222.

² Binet, *La Suggestibility* treats of its use in education.

⁸ Lefevre, *La Suggestion*, 102.

* Funck-Brentano, *Le Suicide*^ 117.